DEMOCRATIC
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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

President Wilhelm Pieck is Eighty

Wilhelm Pieck, President of the German Democratic Republic, will celebrate his eightieth birthday on January 3rd 1956. Wilhelm Pieck, who has been active in the Socialist movement for the past sixty years, has an unequalled record in the fight against German militarism and for a decent peaceful Germany. His life and his work are reviewed in this issue.

MAKING GERMAN HISTORY

Wilhelm Pieck — from Cabinet Maker to President

More than forty years ago, at the 1912 Congress of the old Social Democratic Party of Germany, the well-known right-wing Social Democrat Philipp Scheidemann devoted a large part of his speech to attacking the left-wing policies of an unnamed member of the party. A heckler asked him to name the man he was attacking. Scheidemann replied: "You ought to know that Pieck ("Pik" means Spades in German) is now trumps in Berlin."

And today Wilhelm Pieck, the man he was attacking, is more than ever trumps in Berlin, for he has been, for the past six years, President of the German Democrtic Republic, the first really democratic state in German history.

60 years of History

Any attempt to write a short biographical note on Wilhelm Pieck, the cabinet-maker who became president, is like trying to write a short account of German history for the past 60 years, for during that period Wilhelm Pieck has been a man to reckon with in German politics and the development of the German working-class movement.

Pieck, who next month will be celebrating his eightieth birthday, was born on January 3rd 1876 in the little town of Guben, son of a carter and a laundry-woman. He learned the trade of cabinet-maker, and after completing his apprenticeship tramped through Germany looking for work.

May Day Sacking

In Brunswick he came into touch with the trade union movement for the first time and immediately, without hesitation, joined the Woodworkers Union, of which he has remained a member to the present day. The date was 1894, and Wilhelm Pieck was 18 years old. One year later he joined the Social Democratic Party. He threw himself heart and soul into the work of the party, and soon learned what sacrifices the fight for the emancipation of the workers demanded, for at the end of April 1896, when he was just twenty, he was sacked for urging fellow workers to join in the May Day celebrations.

The next few years were a succession of sackings. Wherever he went, young Pieck got work fairly easily, for he was a good cabinet-maker, but he was soon out of work again, because nothing could stop him from his political and trade union activity.

In the north German port of Bremen, where he settled, he soon began to play an important part in political life, first as trade union official and party dues-collector, and soon in more important posts.

In 1905, just before his thirtieth birthday, young Pieck had become so popular in Bremen that he was elected to the parliament of the Bremen Free City as a Social Democrat, and a few months later he was named full-time secretary of the Bremen Social Democratic Party, one of the most important branches in the whole of Germany.

Soon Wilhelm Pieck, who had somehow found time to study Socialist theory as well as practice, moved to Berlin, where he had been appointed deputy chief of the Central Party School of the Social Democratic Party. Here he became a close friend of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, leaders of the left wing in the German workers' movement.

Battling Kaiser's War

On the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the right-wing leadership of the Social Democratic Party pledged its support to the Kaiser's war. Karl Liebknecht was the only man in the German Reichstag who voted against the war credits, and Wilhelm Pieck gave him his full support. Together with Liebknecht and a handful of other clear-sighted Socialists who opposed the imperialist war, Pieck was expelled from his party post.

But he did not give up the fight, and when the first number of Karl Liebknecht's anti-war paper "Internationale" appeared illegally in March 1915, it was largely through Pieck's help, since he had organised the printing and undergound distribution of the paper.

But paper protests were not enough. Two months later, on May 28th 1915, many hundreds of Berlin women appeared before the Reichstag to demonstrate against the war, and to demand that their sons and husbands be brought home from the front. It was the first anti-war demonstration in Germany, probably the first in any of the countries involved in the war, and it was Wilhelm Pieck who had organised it.

He was arrested, dragged from prison to prison, and after five months was forcibly conscripted into the Kaiser's army. Here he continued his fight against the war, until on May 11th 1917 he was arrested once more for disobeying an order. After a confused series of trials — the Kaiser's war machinery was already beginning to creak alarmingly — he was sent back to the front in a punishment company. He managed to desert before arriving at the front, and reached Berlin, where he succeeded in establishing contact with left-wing Socialist colleagues who had, in the meantime, organised the Spartacus group which later developed into the Communist Party.

Dutch Leave

The Spartacus Group decided that Wilhelm Pieck, together with his son Arthur, a printer, should go illegally to Holland, where they should help to produce a revolutionary paper for distribution to German soldiers.

In February 1918 Wilhelm Pieck and his son managed to smuggle themselves across the closely guarded Dutch frontier, and reached Amsterdam, where, under very difficult conditions, they set to work to produce the newspaper, entitled "Kampf". But producing the paper in Holland was the easiest part of the job. It had to be smuggled into Germany, and it was Wilhelm Pieck who did it.

Smuggling Papers

Carrying great bundles of the paper, he crossed and re-crossed the frontier, delivering it safely in Dusseldorf and Berlin. In October 1918 he brought his last load to Berlin, and decided that his place was now in the German capital, since it was clear that the end of the Kaisers' regime could not be far off.

Together with Karl Liebknecht, who had been imprisoned for more than two years, but finally released under public pressure, Wilhelm Pieck organised the general strikes of Berlin workers which, on November 9th 1918, led to the abdication of the Kaiser and the ending of the war.

The left-wing Socialists, Wilhelm Pieck prominent among them, were mainly responsible for unseating the Kaiser and ending the war, but they could not take over the reins in the new Republican Germany, for they had neglected to establish a strongly disciplined revolutionary party.

As a result, the right-wing Social Democratic leaders, who had supported the Kaiser and the imperialist war until the last moment, were able to take over control. To remedy their mistake, the left-wingers hurriedly called a conference of the Spartacus Group and associated groups at the end of December 1918, and founded the Communist Party. The first central committee included Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, and Wilhelm Pieck.

The right-wing Social Democrats running the provisional government were still in a very shaky position, and they were scared out of their wits by the new development, and by the possibility that the German workers would rally round the new party and call for real socialism instead of the sham socialism which they were offering. So they immediately called in the old Prussian generals to help them remain in power. In the words of the famous saying: "The Kaiser went, but the generals remained."

Officer Killers

On January 15th 1919, reactionary officers of the Kaiser's Guard Cavalry Division raided the house where Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were staying, and seized them. Wilhelm Pieck, who had in the meantime obtained false papers for his colleagues for just such an eventuality, arrived at the house a few minutes too late, and was seized too.

On the same day, the officers brutally murdered the great revolutionaries Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in their headquarters in the Eden Hotel. Wilhelm Pieck escaped death by a miracle, because he was already equipped with a false passport and the reactionary officers did not recognise him, and he was able to escape from their imprisonment one day later.

Later in 1919 he was arrested once again, this time by the regular police, and charged with "high treason", but four months later, before he could be brought to trial, he managed to make a spectacular escape.

Despite the murder of most of the main leaders of the young Communist Party, it grew stronger, and was able to attract wide support amongst the workers, so that by October 1920, in the elections to the Provincial Parliament of Prussia it gained 31 seats. One of the successful candidates in the election was Wilhelm Pieck.

From that date on, until Hitler overthrew the Weimar Republic in 1933, Pieck was without a break a parliamentary representative of the German workers, first in the Prussian Parliament, and after 1928 as a leading member of the Communist fraction in the Reichstag.

Fighting Frame-Ups

Apart from his general work in German politics, Wilhelm Pieck helped to found the International Labour Defence, which played a leading role in the organisation of the international campaigns for the release of frame-up victims such as Sacco and Vanzetti and Tom Mooney in America, Matyas Rakosi in Hungary, and many others.

During this period he made frequent visits abroad, and made his only trip to Britain in November 1929, when he spoke at meetings organised by the Friends of the Soviet Union.

In the years immediately before Hitler came to power, the main fight of the German Communist Party was directed against fascism, and Wilhelm Pieck was associated with repeated attempts to attain joint action by the Communists and Social Democrats against the nazi danger. He appealed again and again to his old acquaintances and colleagues in the Social Democratic leadership to join forces against Hitler, but in vain.

Underground

On January 30th, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor, and the persecution of the Communist Party began. After the Reichstag Fire, set by the nazis themselves, the persecution redoubled, and on March 3rd Ernst Thaelmann, Chairman of the Communist Party, was arrested. Wilhelm Pieck, who had already gone underground some days earlier, now took over the leadership of the party.

For the first few weeks of the Hitler dictatorship he remained in Berlin, reorganising the party which had been shattered by arrests and murders, but the decision was soon taken that he must emigrate, to organise resistance from abroad.

So for the second time in fifteen years, Pieck slipped illegally across the frontier, to organise from abroad the fight for peace and socialism in Germany.

In the emigration, first in Paris and Prague, and later in Moscow, Wilhelm Pieck maintained the continuity in the leadership of the German Communist Party, worked on new political programmes to meet the changing situation, and above all, maintained contact with the thousands of brave Communists struggling underground in Germany despite the ferocity of the nazi repression.

But his work was not only for a decent Germany. As a firm fighter for proletarian internationalism, Wilhelm Pieck was honoured by election, at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in August 1935, to the post of Secretary of the Executive Committee of the International.

During the war, like thousands of other German Communists, Socialists and Democrats, he carried on the fight against Hitler. On March 6th 1942, immediately after his recovery from a serious illness, he made the first of a whole series of broadcasts to the German people.

Work With P. O. W.s

In the prisoner of war camps in the Soviet Union he worked untiringly as member of the "National Committee of Free Germany", convincing captured members of the Wehrmacht that Hitler's policies could bring only disaster; appealing to all opponents of Hitlerism and war to work together to end the war and to build a new and really democratic Germany from the ruins.

In May 1945 the war at last came to an end, and a few weeks later Wilhelm Pieck arrived back in Berlin to take over the leadership of the Communist Party. He rallied round him the handful of Communist veterans who had survived the war in the underground, in prisons and in concentration camps. Ernst Thaelmann had been murdered by the nazis a few months before the end of the war, after 11 years imprisonment, and the full weight of the task of leading the party fell on the shoulders of Wilhelm Pieck, now nearly 70 years old.

The first task was to end the division in the ranks of the German working class, and Wilhelm Pieck threw all his strength into this task. In April 1946 his efforts and the efforts of many thousands of Communists and Socialists in East Germany, who had learnt the lesson the hard way under Hitler's savage repression, were crowned with success,

and the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party were merged to form the Socialist Unity Party.

Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, Social Democratic leader, became joint chairmen of the new party.

The problem of the unity of the workers' parties had been solved; enormous tasks remained. The junker estates were divided up amongst the peasants in East Germany, the factories were taken over by the workers, nazis were removed from public life, the schools were reformed; and in all these fields Wilhelm Pieck's enormous experience in public life and the socialist movement was very valuable.

But the problem of German unity remained unsolved — blocked by the partitioning policies of the western powers. The partitioning culminated in September 1949 in the formation of the separate West German State under Anglo-American protection and inspiration.

The answer in East Germany was the formation of the East German state at the beginning of October 1949, and on October 11th Wilhelm Pieck was elected by the People's Chamber to act as first President of the German Democratic Republic. In 1953 he was unanimously re-elected for a further four-year term.

On his 80th birthday, January 3rd 1956, Wilhelm Pieck can look back proudly on a life of struggle and a life of service: of struggle against the forces of war and reaction, and of service to the finest aim on earth — peace and the emancipation of mankind.

WHAT DID PIECK SAY IN 1907?

Fifty Years Fighting For Progress

In his sixty years of political activity Wilhelm Pieck has always spoken out for workers' rights, for peace and for socialism. On these pages we present a small selection of quotations from his speeches and articles during this period.

* * *

Eight Hour Day

"The motion presented to you calls for an eight-hour day for all workers in municipal enterprises. This is a demand which will make the hair of many present, particularly the private industrialists, stand on end ... At present the ten hour day is the rule in most municipal enterprises, but some workers still have a twelve-hour day."

Speech in the Parliament of Bremen Free City, Febrary 7th 1907.

Are Ballots Enough?

"We shall not be able to win socialism with our ballot papers, for the capitalists will not just sit back and watch us, they will use all their weapons against us as long as they possess them."

Article in the "Bürger Zeitung", Bremen, May 23rd 1908.

All out on May Day

"I do not agree with the method of sending deputations to the employers, asking them kindly to allow us to hold May Day demonstrations. The workers must see that they must celebrate May Day, not with the permission of the employers, but against the will of the employers."

Speech at the Congress of the Social Democratic Party, Nuremberg, September 15th 1908.

"Workers, Soldiers, Comrades! ... We demand not the abdication of a monarch, but the formation of a republic! We demand a socialist republic with all its consequences. Forward in the fight for peace, liberty and bread."

From a leaflet of the Berlin Workers' and Soldiers' Council, signed by Pieck, Liebknecht and other socialist leaders on November 9th 1918, the day on which Kaiser Wilhelm abdicated.

Martyrs

"... 15,000 proletarians have fallen in Germany on the battlefield of the revolution, and thousands of our comrades have been thrown into jail. Our comrades are hunted, are driven from house and home, our newspapers are forbidden, our printing shops smashed. All means are being used in an attempt to strangle the revolutionary movement in Germany ... But we do not complain about our losses. We know that our struggle demands sacrifices, and that the class enemy uses all means to remain in the saddle ... That is why we must unite the workers, for we know that if we are united the struggle will be shorter, and the sacrifices will be fewer."

Speech at the Congress of the Communist Party of Germany, Berlin, November 2nd 1920.

Fight War

"The imperialists are preparing at full speed for a new world war ... The Communists propose holding a plebiscite against the construction of armoured cruisers (the beginning of German naval rearmament after the first world war, ed.) because this will give the workers a chance to express their readiness to fight against this war policy."

Article in the "Rote Fahne", Berlin, October 14th 1928.

Generals & Nazis

"A clique of generals, together with the National Socialists, are making preparations for the establishment of a military dictatorship ... which aims at a breach of relations with the Soviet Union, and war to destroy the Soviet Union. The process of fascisation is going ahead rapidly in Germany ... Under the leadership of the Communist Party the masses are being mobilised for the fight against fascism, and for the revolutionary struggle against war preparations."

"Leningradskaya Pravda" Leningrad, May 7th 1932.

Unity ...

"We Communists want to establish unity in the youth movement, party organisations, trade unions and everywhere else. If we can form a joint mass protest movement against the fascist terror ... we shall be able to beat Hitler, destroy fascism and build a free socialist Germany."

Illegal leaflet addressed to members of the Social Democratic Youth Movement, distributed in August 1934.

... With Socialists

"In order to create a force capable of overthrowing fascism in Germany, the Communist Party ... wishes to reach agreement with the social Democratic Party on joint action and a central united front agreement."

"Die Internationale", April 1936.

Solidarity with Jews

"The new increased pogroms directed against Jews in Germany have caused a strong reaction amongst all decent people in the world ... The masses of Germany, above all the working class under the leadership of the Communists, reject all hate campaigns directed against the Jews: they feel solidarity with the persecuted Jews ... This fight against fascist barbarity is not only a matter for the working masses in Germany, but also for the peoples of the whole world. Everybody who protests against the terrible pogroms must draw the correct conclusion that effective protection against fascist barbarity and war provocation can only be found in the creation of a broad international fighting front against fascism and against its allies in the reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie in the democratic countries."

"Rundschau", Basel, November 24th 1938.

"Overthrow Hitler"

"We, the Germans, will only be able to live in peace and friendship with other peoples after we have overthrown Hitler. Only then will we be able to rehabilitate the name of Germany, which has been besmirched throughout the world by Hitler's war crimes and barbarities ... But we shall only be able to do this if everyone in his place does everything to overthrow Hitler."

Address to the German people from Radio Moscow, April 8th 1942.

"German compatriots! You can be a mighty force if you join together to fight against Hitler. On your side you will find the peoples of the Soviet Union, Britain and America, and all the countries oppressed by Hitler. Your enemies are the Hitler gang and the big businessmen who are making thousands of millions of marks from this war."

Address to the German people from Radio Moscow, September 1st 1942.

Berlin Liberated

"Berlin has been liberated from Hitler's gang ... A difficult period faces our people. Under military occupation the German people will have to make good the damage which the Hitlerite war and Hitlerite barbarity have caused to other nations. Our people will fulfill this duty because they know its necessity, and because this is the way to their own rehabilitation. The nazi criminals must be dragged out of their hiding places, and rendered harmless."

Address to the German people from Radio Moscow, May 4th 1945.

Workers' Split

"We must never forget that Hitler was only able to come to power, and launch the Second World War, because the working people of Germany were split and because it was not possible to establish the unity of the democratic forces in the fight against Hitlerism ... The task of the hour is to establish a firm unity of the anti-fascist democratic and progressive forces of the people. We Communists believe that this unity must and can be established."

"Deutsche Volkszeitung", Berlin, June 12th 1945.

Who is Responsible?

"We must clarify the question of the responsibility (for the Hitlerite war). It is not a service to the working class to oversimplify the question and say that only the bourgeoisie was guilty of the war, and that the working class is completely innocent ... If the working class, the majority of the population, had been as a whole innocent ... how could Hitler have driven the whole of our people into this disastrous war? The question of the coguilt of the German working class must be investigated, and the necessary lessons must be learned. We want the working class to see clearly how it could come about that Hitler established his barbaric power ... Of course the anti-fascist pioneers waged a heroic struggle against the Hitler regime, and paid for it with immeasurable sacrifices, but it is no service to the working class to equate these pioneers with the whole working class."

"Deutsche Volkszeitung" Berlin September 20th 1945

"Keep German Unity"

"The four anti-fascist parties (Communists, Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, Liberal Democrats, ed) have called this demonstration for the unity of the nation, to ensure the establishment of a united Germany. They were moved to do this by the ever more open efforts which are being made to destroy the national unity of Germany ... Various groups and persons are utilising the present division of our country into four occupation zones to try to partition Germany permanently ... One of the reasons for this is the attempt to save from destruction, at least in some parts of Germany, the forces of German imperialism."

"Deutsche Volkszeitung" Berlin February 1st 1946.

"Don't Repeat Mistakes"

"The mistakes which were made in 1918 must not be repeated.. Above all we must see to it that the forces which have always espoused war and the policy of conquering the world are wiped out."

From a speech to youth officials of the Socialist Unity Party, Berlin July 30th 1946.

Reaction in West

"This is the true position in the western occupation zones ... Jewish cemeteries are being desecrated, nazi activists and Hitlerite officers who shot 'deserters' after the capitulation are being freed, church authorities are exercising film and theatre censorship, the trade unions are being prevented from having a say in the factories — these are a few of the steps in the path of reaction in the West and South of Germany."

"Neues Deutschland" Berlin June 13th 1948.

East-West Cooperation

"The West German Federal Government and the Government of the German Democratic Republic must work together or side by side in order to serve the national interests of the German people and to struggle for the unity of Germany, for a peace treaty and national independence. If the West German Federal Government and Federal Parliament will join in this endeavour, then we shall come closer to each other, and shall finally be able to overcome the partitioning of Germany and to create German unity, which will prevent Germany from becoming an American colony and the deployment area for a new imperialist war."

From a speech to both houses of parliament of the German Democratic Republic after election as President on October 11th 1949.

French and German

"The joint resistance of the patriots of both France and Germany to the re-establishment of German militarism in West Germany which

threatens the national security of France and Germany to an equal degree, has created a new situation in German-French relations which I welcome whole-heartedly. The German Democratic Republic, for its part, will never tolerate that war should ever again be waged against the French people by Germans."

From a Berlin radio address, November 13th 1952.

Workers' Rule

"The working class in our German Democratic Republic has taken over the factories of the monopolists and is running them itself. The working peasants have taken back their fields, of which the junkers robbed them in the past ... For our young people the German Democratic Republic provides every possibility to learn a trade and grow up imbued with a spirit of proletarian internationalism and friendship for all peoples. We have thus taken the first steps towards the glorious goal, the construction of a Socialist society."

From a speech delivered in Berlin, January 18th 1953.

Reconstruction

"In the past four years a great work of reconstruction has been done in our Republic ... We have had the generous help of the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies in our work. We must and we shall develop our German Democratic Republic in such a fashion that all peace-loving Germans will come to regard it as the model for a united and democratic German state."

From a speech to the People's Chamber after his re-election for a second four-year term as president on October 7th 1953.

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DRESDEN OLD MASTERS ON SHOW IN BERLIN

More than 500 world famous old masters, saved from destruction by the Soviet Army at the end of World War Two, went on exhibition in East Berlin on November 27th. The old masters put on show are part of the 1240 pictures of the famous Dresden gallery which were rescued by Soviet troops immediately after the end of the war, and taken to Moscow for restoration and safe keeping.

Tens of thousands of people passed through the Berlin National Gallery during the first few days of the exhibition, to admire such pictures as Raffael's "Sistine Madonna", Titian's "Tribute Money", a whole room full of Rembrandts, as well as more modern works by Degas, Gauguin, Manet and Toulouse Lautrec.

The pictures will be exhibited in Berlin for five months before they are returned to the Dresden Gallery, which is being restored to accomodate them.

During the war, the nazi authorities removed the pictures from the Dresden Gallery and hid them in various mines and quarries. Most of the pictures had not even been crated, but simply dumped in damp underground passages. In the weeks of confusion which followed the end of the war, Soviet officers and soldiers tracked down the art treasures, and experts were specially flown from Moscow to decide how these treasures could be saved. It was decided that the difficult work of restoration, drying the pictures, and removing the mould with which many of them were covered could only be done in the Soviet Union.

Now that they have been fully restored — the work of drying out some of the pictures, particularly those painted on wood, took several years — they have been handed over to the Government of the German Democratic Republic.

East German Cabinet Reorganised

The cabinet of the German Democratic Republic was reorganised on November 24th; the main feature of the reorganisation was the division of the Ministry for Heavy Industry, which had become too cumbersome. In future three separate ministries, the Ministry of Mines and Foundries; the Ministry for the Chemical Industry; and the Ministry for Coal and Power, will divide the work between them.

In future Walter Ulbricht will be First Deputy Prime Minister. Hitherto he was one of a number of deputies to the Prime Minister. Bruno Leuschner, Chairman of the State Planning Commission, will retain this post and simultaneously become one of the Deputy Prime Ministers.

Fritz Selbmann, a former miner who had been Minister for Heavy Industry, received the rank of Deputy Prime Minister, and will in future head a newly-formed coordinating Commission for Industry and Traffic. Two other coordinating commissions were simultaneously formed to deal with consumer goods and with agricultural problems. Professor Fred Oelssner, leading Marxist theoretician, was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and named to lead the Consumer Goods Commission.

Dr. Hans Loch, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, gave up his post in the Ministry of Finance at his own request, but remained as Deputy Prime Minister charged with special tasks on All-German Affairs.

The former State Secretariat for State Security was converted into a Ministry, and State Secretary Ernst Wollweber was named Minister of State Security.

Writers Say "Free Nelson"

Leading East German writers, including Anna Seghers ("The Seventh Cross") and Ludwig Renn ("War") have cabled President Eisenhower appealing to him to intervene in the case of Steve Nelson, American progressive leader and writer who is threatened with a twenty-year prison sentence. German veterans of the International Brigade in Spain, in which Steve Nelson also fought, have joined in the appeal.

Steve Nelson was originally sentenced to twenty years imprisonment by a Pittsburg court for his part in the fight for peace. On appeal the sentence was quashed by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, but the attorney generals of 27 states appealed that decision to the United States Supreme Court, which is now hearing the case.

West Germans Say "No" to Wehrmacht

An overwhelming majority of all West German women reject the new Wehrmacht which is being raised there. This was clearly shown by the results of a public opinion poll conducted early in November by the semi-official EMNID public opinion poll, which asked a representative sample of women in all parts of West Germany the question: "Would you like your son or your husband to serve in the new army?"

85% of those asked said "No".

West German Foundry Votes Left

The 12,000 workers of the important "Westfalenhuette" foundry in Dortmund, Ruhr have elected a majority of Communists on to their new works council. The result of the election, in which over 93 % of the workers participated, announced on December 1st, showed that the new council will consist of eleven Communists, nine Social Democrats, and five non-party workers.

The Communist candidates and several of the non-party workers associated with them fought the election on the slogan "What the people create should belong to the people", and call for the nationalisation of heavy industry in West Germany.

Three Million Marks for Nazi Pensions

288 former leading nazis and militarists, and their widows, including many Hitlerite generals, draw pensions totalling 3,350,000 marks from the West Berlin authorities, it was officially disclosed in West Berlin. The pensions paid to these individuals average over 1000 pounds sterling annually.

Victims of fascism in West Berlin who are unable to work receive pensions averaging little over 100 pounds sterling annually, and they are deprived of even this meagre pension if they join the peace movement or such organisations as the German-Soviet Friendship Society.

Life Imprisonment for Nazi Wardress

The district court of Neu Brandenburg, East Germany has passed a sentence of life imprisonment on a nazi concentration camp wardress who managed to evade arrest until a few months ago.

Evidence was given that the wardress, Erika Bergmann, had killed at least six inmates of Ravensbrueck Concentration Camp.

THE CASE OF THE KIDNAPPED CONGRESSMEN

By The Editor

On November 27th an American army car with four occupants, including two American Congressmen, made a tour of East Berlin. There was nothing unusual in this: hundreds of cars from the west, German, British, American, French and others enter East Berlin every day for business or on sight-seeing trips.

The unusual thing about this car was that it was not only equipped with a radio telephone, but that it was in constant radio communication with American headquarters in West Berlin.

The German Democratic Republic, and the Democratic Sector of Berlin, which is the seat of government of the Republic, like most other countries, has laws regulating the use of private radio transmitters on its territory.

In view of the fact that the radio transmitter in the car was not licenced in the German Democratic Republic, People's Police stopped the car and detained its occupants. They were promptly turned over to the Soviet garrison, which deals with cases affecting allied personnel, and soon returned safe and sound to West Berlin.

The "case of the kidnapped congressmen" would have ended there, just another of the little incidents inevitable in a city like Berlin, with its open frontier between East and West, if it had not been for the intervention of the American Commandant in West Berlin, the British, American and French High Commissioners, and the millionaire press in the western countries.

All these agencies set up a howl about an alleged "breach of the four-power status of Berlin".

In fact, of course, the People's Police were just carrying out their duty to see that the laws of the German Democratic Republic are observed. On September 20th 1955 the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union signed a treaty under which the Soviet Union granted the Republic full sovereignty, and this sovereignty naturally includes the right to see that foreigners visiting the territory of the Republic and the Democratic Sector of Berlin conform with the laws in force there.

And the western powers really have no cause to complain about an alleged "unilateral breach of a four-power agreement". In West Germany and West Berlin they long ago quite openly tore up the four-power agreements, including the basic Potsdam Agreement which provided for the elimination of all German armed forces, all war veterans organisations "in such manner as permanently to prevent the revival or reorganisation of German militarism and nazism".

Nobody would claim that that agreement has been kept.

So if any congressmen are thinking of making a sight-seeing tour in East Berlin in future, they should see to it that the radio transmitter in their car is properly licenced by the authorities of the German Democratic Republic. And they should remember that the German Democratic Republic is not a satellite of the United States or of any other nation.

Playing "We March Against England"?

A military band will be one of the first five companies of the new West German Wehrmacht which will begin training at Andernach near Bonn on January 2nd 1956. It has not yet been announced whether their repertoire will include the nazi song "We are marching against England".

The "New York Herald Tribune" reported on December 1st that press photographers had been asked not to take pictures of any of the men volunteering for the new Wehrmacht. The American report states: "It was said that in the present mood in West Germany, a man employed in a factory or other large enterprise (who volunteered) might have difficulties with his fellow workers."

British Soldiers Aid War Criminals

A British military band from the West Berlin garrison played at a charity concert held in West Berlin on December 3rd to collect funds for "late-returning German prisoners of war". These "late-returning prisoners" are in fact nazi war criminals recently amnestied by the Soviet Union and returned to Germany.

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

A new year is looming ahead, and in every country the printing presses are churning out calendars and almanachs for 1956. And as in every year for the last four, the Schild publishing house in Munich is spewing forth tens of thousands of copies of one of the most revolting publications I have ever had to study.

It is the "German Soldiers' Calendar" for 1956. Last year at this time we dealt very fully with the 1955 edition of this militaristic production, with its appeal by Hitler's Field Marshall Ritter von Leeb calling for the West German Wehrmacht "to be filled with the same spirit ... as the German soldiers who bore the weapons in the last two world wars".

This year the introduction is written by a fully-fledged war criminal, Field Marshall Georg von Kuechler, who writes "Never abandon hope. This is the slogan which gave us, the old soldiers, strength and hope in the difficult times."

It is worth recalling that Field Marshall Kuechler, nazi commander in chief in North Russia, was sentenced to twenty years imprisonment by an American court on October 27th 1948. He was found guilty of murder of 230 sick Soviet women in a hospital in his area; of approving of the murder of prisoners of war; and of supporting the massacre of Jews by passing on an order laying down that "German soldiers must understand the necessity for the hard but just punishment of the Jewish sub-humans". The American court found no extenuating circumstances, and described von Kuechler as a "cold and ruthless personality".

Despite this he was released by the American authorities on February 18th 1953 after serving only a small fraction of his sentence.

This preface by a leading war criminal sets the tone for the rest of the 180-page calendar, with its glorification of all the traditions of German militarism.

On page 33 for instance, former nazi officer Helmut Damerau writes: "We must learn from our western partners about the technical use of new weapons ... but it is particularly necessary for us to learn from the spiritual traditions of German soldierliness ... The German soldier, wearing the steel helmet of the Second World War, was chivalrous and decent."

The continuity of German militarism yesterday and today is stressed by a whole series of articles on the Second World War, including five pages, under the title "Waffen SS in Narva", closely followed by an analysis of the organisation of NATO, in the framework of which the new West German Wehrmacht will operate.

That should be enough to give readers some idea of the contents of this appalling book, which will obviously find its place under many West German Christmas trees, round which the scar-faced colonels, the SS officers and the concentration camp guards will gather to sing "Silent Night, Holy Night".

But something else is worthy of mention. This is the listing at the end of the book of no fewer than 888 names and addresses of old soldiers' organisations in West Germany. A few of them may be relatively harmless charitable organisations, such as the "Association of Blinded Soldiers", but the vast mass of them are regimental associations of soldiers who fought in the Hitlerite Wehrmacht. The 1955 calendar listed "only" 749 such organisations, so the number has increased considerably in the past year.

The listing includes 29 associations of veteran SS men, including the associations of the "SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler"; the "SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend"; and two volunteer SS divisions composed of Belgian quislings.

Readers in Denmark may be interested to learn that one of these militarist associations has its headquarters on Danish soil; I quote the entire entry: "Grenadier Regiment 557 (331 I.D.), Max W. Moebius, Norby Hotel, Scherrebeck, North Schleswig, Denmark".

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Another case of apparently deliberate lying about East Germany has been brought to my attention by a London reader of GERMAN REPORT, and I am glad to take the opportunity of dealing with it.

This is all the more serious, since it is clothed in a pseudo-scientific form. The American authoress Anne Lyon Haight has written a volume "Banned Books", published in London this year by the reputable firm Allen and Unwin. It has also presumably appeared in the United States. This book lists what purports to be a "Chronological list of books banned from 387 BC to 1954."

On page 84 of the English edition appears this notice "Heine — E. Berlin — 1954 — Works banned by the Russians."

This, of course, is just a silly lie. Heinrich Heine was one of Germany's greatest poets, and incidentally a friend of Karl Marx. His works are not merely held in honour here, but have appeared in editions of hundreds of thousands of copies: selections of his poems and prose works are available in every bookshop in East Berlin and the German Democratic Republic. In addition, special celebrations will be held throughout the Republic next year, which is the centenary of Heine's death in exile in Paris.

And in any case, no books could have been "banned by the Russians" in 1954. Since the formation of the German Democratic Republic in 1949, any question of what works should be "banned" has been decided by the East German authorities. These authorities have of course banned books — books like Hitler's "Mein Kampf" and other fascist and militarist works, and works calculated to fan racial hatred.

But to return to the "scientific" list of Miss Haight. On page 92 she states that the works of Sinclair Lewis were banned in East Berlin in 1954. As a matter of fact, of course, Sinclair Lewis is one of the most popular American authors here, and several of his books have appeared in large editions.

On page 105 of her work, Miss Haight just becomes plain ridiculous. She states: "East Berlin Communists raided the schools in search of western books. Found Mickey Mouse Comics and banned them as Mickey was classed as an anti-Red rebel."

Nobody, of course, has ever thought of classing Mickey Mouse as an anti-Red or any other sort of rebel. What have in fact been banned, and we dealt with the matter fully in our last issue, are the sexy, sadistic and racialist type of American comic smuggled in from West Berlin.

And from what I hear from Britain and the United States, there is also a strong movement for the banning of such "comics" from the schools there.

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